

Planning Partnerships Work

The Chattanooga Area Civil War Sites Assessment

The preservation of our nation's special places can no longer be solely the responsibility of federal, state, or local agencies or even private, non-profit conservation organizations and land trusts. To truly preserve our historic, natural, and recreational heritage, existing partnerships must be strengthened and new ones initiated. Partnerships can serve not only for land acquisition, but also for preservation planning and management of cultural resources.

True partnerships must incorporate the ideas and input of both public and private organizations and individuals. Federal, state, and local agencies, community organizations, businesses, and private citizens must all have a role. Partnerships need to be as inclusive and creative as possible to succeed, and they need to incorporate the strengths that each partner brings to the effort. These concepts of partnership were central to the success of the Chattanooga Area Civil War Sites Assessment.

In 1993, the Congressional Civil War Sites Advisory Commission recognized the battlefields associated with the Battle of Chickamauga, Georgia, and the Battles for Chattanooga, Tennessee, as among the most threatened Civil War sites in the nation. These battles were part of the campaign for control of the Chattanooga

region, the "Gateway to the Deep South," and were defining events in the outcome of the American Civil War and the history of our nation.

However, the loss of regional open space and agricultural lands to continued urban and suburban growth and development in the Chattanooga metropolitan area threatens these resources. One county next to the Chickamauga battlefield has grown in population by 72% in the past 25 years. This growth has resulted in the loss or degradation of many significant sites and threatens all the remaining resources. These resources, however, are a unique component of what makes the Chattanooga region special; they add immeasurably to the local quality of life and fuel a multi-million dollar heritage tourism industry. The Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park (Park) alone attracts more than one million visitors annually. The protection of these significant historic resources is not only the right thing to do, but it is also good business.

The Assessment

These factors led the Park to initiate discussions with state and local planners and historians about how best to preserve and interpret Civil War resources in the Chattanooga area. These discussions spawned the Chattanooga Area Civil War Sites Assessment (Assessment) in 1994. The Assessment would evaluate related Civil War resources immediately adjacent to the Park and throughout the Chattanooga region and stimulate actions to better preserve and interpret some of the area's most important Civil War sites.

The Chattanooga Area Civil War Sites Assessment was patterned after the Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park (FRSP) Related Lands Study conducted in the early-1990s. The Chattanooga Assessment used many of the same evaluation criteria and processes as had been used at FRSP, but it also built on insights made during that study. The FRSP Related Lands Study was conducted largely by National Park Service (NPS) staff at the park and from the regional office. There had been little involvement of other levels of government or other agencies. Some of those involved in the FRSP study felt it would be easier to develop an information database and disseminate the recommendations if there was more local involvement. As a result, the

Lookout Mountain reminds visitors of the historic Civil War events that took place within its shadow. With metropolitan Chattanooga below, the view relates the need for cooperative preservation and regional planning efforts. Photo courtesy NPS.





Assessment team members study historic and land use maps in developing recommendations for a portion of the Lookout Mountain battlefield. Much of that battlefield is outside the boundary of the Park. Photo courtesy NPS.

decision was made to assemble a planning team that included representatives from local, state, and regional planning agencies and governments and to fully involve the public in the Assessment. These partners were involved in every phase of the Assessment—from the formation of the process to the selection of study sites, to the site evaluations, and to the development of preservation and interpretation recommendations. They guided the Assessment process and helped preserve the Chattanooga region’s Civil War heritage.

The Assessment planning team included representatives from the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Regional Planning Agency (RPA), the Coosa Valley Regional Development Center (RDC), the Georgia Department of Natural Resources’ Historic Preservation Division (HPD), the Southeast Tennessee Development District (SETDD), the National Military Park, the National Park Service’s Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program, and the Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites, Inc. (APCWS). The NPS’s American Battlefield Protection Program (ABPP) provided invaluable financial and technical support that made the Assessment a reality.

The primary objective of the Assessment was to develop and implement preservation and interpretation strategies for the most significant Civil War resources in the Chattanooga area. Typically, these resources lie outside the bounds of the Park and provide the context to understanding the overall military campaign punctuated by the Battle of Chickamauga and the Battles for Chattanooga. Discussions with planning team members during the Assessment also addressed the need for comprehensive planning to improve the entrance corridors or “gateways” into the Park units and development along Park boundaries.

The planning team worked under a number of guiding principles:

- Resource protection/interpretation and economic development are not mutually exclusive options for communities and the region; they can both thrive—but only if directed in appropriate locations and in appropriate balance;
- The project must be a true partnership of government agencies at all levels, non-profit organizations, and individual citizens;
- Significant sites will be protected and interpreted **in partnership** with affected property owners and land managers;
- The Park will help area agencies and organizations protect and interpret significant sites with no intention of adding those sites to the Park;
- Discussions about the protection and interpretation of important sites should focus not only on the intrinsic historic and cultural benefits gained, but also on the regional economic and recreational benefits possible through heritage tourism and open space preservation;
- Strive to involve, educate, and garner input from as many different interests as possible and to incorporate all input into the Assessment process and findings.

The planning team evaluated 38 Civil War sites in a two-state, three-county study area. The site evaluation process was kept simple and easy to replicate, so that project partners, if desired, could use the same process and criteria to evaluate other Civil War sites in the region beyond the scope of the Assessment. Before actual site visits by the entire planning team, research materials were gathered for each site. These materials included information on historic significance, cultural resources, present land use, and ownership. This information will be maintained at the Park for future reference and research. The planning team and others then visited each of the sites and evaluated them based on several criteria (see page 14).

From these site visits and concurrent and subsequent discussions, the planning team developed specific preservation objectives and recommendations for each site. These objectives and recommendations include opportunities for both resource protection and interpretation. Fact sheets on each site and an Assessment report reflect the work of the planning team and public input.

Project Successes

The planning team realized a number of successes during the Assessment. The most notable was the level of involvement in the Assessment by private citizens. The site visits offered a unique opportunity for individuals to accompany the planning team, learn more about their region and individual study sites, and provide comments.

Interested citizens and a few local elected officials and decision-makers accompanied the planning team on these visits. At each site, those present learned about the significance of the resources and participated in discussions about how best to preserve and interpret that site.

The level of site visit participation reflected the interest of local citizens and organizations in the preservation of the region's Civil War heritage. Support from local Civil War enthusiasts, historical associations, and area landowners was significant and will, assuredly, lead to better long-term protection for many of the assessed sites.

The Assessment also brought attention to two extremely important North Georgia study sites that needed better preservation, McLemore's Cove and Ringgold. These two sites figured prominently in the Assessment, but both needed individual attention. Involvement in the Assessment led area organizations and communities to pursue and receive ABPP assistance for evaluating the planning, management, and interpretative needs of the assessed sites.

Other significant successes were also realized. The personal involvement of partner staff members and other individuals on the project planning team led to their ownership of both the project and the process. They provided invaluable resources in the form of time, expertise, and information to the Assessment process and helped to develop a better product than the NPS or any individual partner could have accomplished alone. Because of this cooperative achievement, the planning team expects local planners to more readily embrace the conclusions and recommendations of the study.

Each project partner now better understands the others' missions and responsibilities. The new relationships forged during this process have

strengthened existing regional partnerships and spawned new ones. For example, the Chattanooga-Hamilton County Regional Planning Agency (RPA), which reviews development proposals in Chattanooga and Hamilton County will, hereafter, consider whether proposed development affects an Assessment site. If one of these sites could be impacted, the RPA staff will involve other interested agencies in the development approval discussions. This does not guarantee blanket protection or pristine preservation of significant Civil War resources in the Chattanooga area, but it does provide the Park and other Civil War-related interests an opportunity to comment on local land use and development decision-making.

The Assessment also provided a focus for Park staff and priorities. Now, more so than in recent decades, the Park staff recognizes the significance of the Civil War resources that are not presently preserved either by the NPS or other public interests. The Park intends to continue developing partnerships that will lead to the long-term preservation of remaining historically significant sites and the interpretation of "lost" sites that still harbor the memories of important actions.

Project Shortcomings

The planning team also suffered a few shortcomings during the project. Generating significant interest from local elected officials, planning commission members, and local and regional agency directors was the greatest hurdle. Area leaders were invited, sometimes with personal invitations, to all project public meetings, site visits, workshops, and special events. Workshops on heritage tourism and alternative development techniques were held specifically for area leaders. Even though few area leaders attended project meetings, they were kept informed through mailings, newsletters, and personal visits from planning team members. Probably, even now, few leaders understand the project or have a personal interest in implementing its findings. This will offer numerous challenges to the planning team as members strive to implement regional resource protection and interpretation efforts.

The planning team also discovered that it should have identified key landowners at individual study sites earlier in the process. This information was gathered late in the project, after site visits were completed. In collaboration with the Trust for Public Land, the planning team hosted a workshop on land preservation tools and their benefits to landowners. All identified landowners were invited to attend. This workshop was very successful; four or five owners of large holdings came forward to discuss pursuing long-term protection of family farms and lands. Had the planning team spent more time earlier, it might have

Assessment team members take in the view from the porch of the Cravens House on the Lookout Mountain battlefield. Viewsheds were important considerations for members as they evaluated each site. Photo courtesy NPS.



identified additional landowners willing to discuss options for preservation of their properties.

The final shortcoming of the project was the time required to complete the Assessment; it took more than two years to accomplish. Portions of at least one site were lost during this time because the planning team was not aware of the impending and previously planned development of the site.

Future Activities

The most difficult part of the Assessment process—implementing the recommendations—still lies ahead. If the information and the recommendations are not regularly used by area planners and officials, only limited benefits will come from this cooperative preservation planning effort. The planning team continues to market the Assessment and the concept of comprehensive historic resource protection to area leaders in order to make preservation a reality. The Assessment's report and fact sheets on each site are presently being widely distributed to governmental agencies and other organizations.

In 1997, the planning team hopes to develop a Geographic Information System (GIS) database containing much of the information the Assessment developed for individual sites. Producing the information in a GIS format should make the Assessment findings more accessible to area planners and thereby encourage them to include it in local land use documents. Future land use decisions will affect many of these historic sites as well as the overall quality of life and "sense of place" that make the Chattanooga and North Georgia area a multi-million dollar heritage tourism location. Hopefully, the Chattanooga Area Civil War Sites Assessment will help guide some of these decisions.

Planning partnerships really do work. It worked for Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park and Assessment partners, and it will work for other efforts around the

nation. This is a highly effective way for the NPS to plan when faced with related lands issues and protection of resources beyond NPS boundaries.

If you would like further information about the Chattanooga Area Civil War Sites Assessment, please contact Superintendent Pat Reed or Chief Historian Jim Ogden at the Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park at (706) 866-9241, or Outdoor Recreation Planner Chris Abbett, Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program, Southeast Field Area (404) 562-3175.

CACWSA Criteria for Site Evaluation

Significant Views—Views both into the site and from the site

Setting—The land uses of the site and surrounding lands

Battle Actions—Both the physical remains and intangible qualities of the occurring actions, including the intensity of the combat and the decisiveness of maneuvers and presence of troops

Well-documented Structures, Sites, and Features—Both existing features and remains of features that were fully documented

Presumed Wartime Features—Both existing features and remains of features that were not fully documented

Original Terrain—Integrity of existing terrain and whether it is similar to its Civil War appearance

Gateways—Whether the site served as a primary entrance corridor into one of the existing NMP units